

potent, in fact, that not all Conmen feel it prudent to prescribe it. Although all Conmen subscribe to some variant of the eternal indestructibility of the human soul, a perplexing difficulty attends its recommendation to the masses. Since no one has ever returned from the grave to report on the nature of the afterlife, that nature is given to us only through Divine Prophecy which, unfortunately, varies wildly because of being viewed through the lens of the particular Prophet's time and culture. The most potent traditions to which we Conmen adhere prefer to not only ignore Prophetic discrepancies about the existence of the afterlife, but to add to the primal, animal fear of death the fear of eternal spiritual damnation to a life in hell. The general acceptance of this forbidding prospect greatly increases the Conman's utility to his flock, as he is the only one among them empowered to act as a sort of cosmic attorney with the Omnicon.

your guides to the eternal Truths revealed to the ancient seers. Your Faith is the gateway to the Promised Land wherein those Truths are manifested. Whenever you doubt revealed Truth, you cut yourself off from any possibility of achieving loving union with the Source that created and sustains the universe. You *must* believe or you will perish.

For those who truly believe, the Omnicon is present in every moment of their waking lives. The true believer sees with clarity the expression of the Divine Will in all of the day's events. One of the principal functions of Conmen is to enable you to focus your concentration on, as well as interpret for you, the continual experience of the Divine in everyday life. Without our guidance you will inevitably drift into one or another of the carnal traps set by the Omnicon to test your Faith. When you no longer need us as your Shepherd you will have become a candidate to join the Conman brotherhood.

Why then, you may ask, are Conmen's exhortations and explications required if the ancient primacy and ultimate efficacy of belief in the Omnicon is so self-evident? There are several answers to this question, all of them necessary, and each of them compelling. Historically, Faith has evolved. The poetic image of the Garden of Eden describes the earliest human condition in which our original ancestors had not yet tasted the fruit of knowledge. That "fruit" is, in essence, the knowledge of ourselves as discreet mortal entities. With this knowledge comes the experience of free will. With free will comes the knowledge of good and evil. With that knowledge comes confusion about what exactly constitutes good and evil. With that knowledge *also* comes the experience of the mystery of Life and Death. The earliest primitive tribes had universal need for shamans and diviners to seek guidance from beyond the material horizon. But these medicine men were not yet full-fledged Conmen because early man had not yet developed the civilizations needed to shelter the Omnicon's Prophets/Messiahs and propagate their Word. This is not to say that pre-civilized man had no one to whom the existence of the Omnicon was revealed—the tasting of the fruit of knowledge could be considered as the primary revelation—but that these hypothetical proto-Conmen were tribally isolated and lacked the means to codify and transmit their insight.

But, the doubter may persist, ancient origins don't prove present need, do they? The eternal need for a corrective to the human tendency to wander off into error, has been noted. The need of the ordinary mortal for intimate interface with Spiritual Authority follows. If just anyone could perform this function, then almost everyone would try. Many are called, but few are chosen. The rushing stream of the novice Conman's latent spiritual charisma must be channeled into an all-consuming identification with the Omnicon in the deep lakes of tradition and ritual. The Omnicon's ministrations must have a "special quality" that can be greatly facilitated by the appropriate ambiance.

One aspect of the "special quality" that gives the Conman's benediction special force is the ability to bring to the fore in the consciousness of the congregant the full spectrum of human emotions. Most useful to the Conman is the feeling of fear. In the infinite human imagination, that emotion—which is so necessary to self-defense on the material plane—is transmuted to cosmic dimensions when one contemplates one's ultimate demise. The promise of life after death is the most potent anodyne in the Conman's dispensary, so

## I AM A CONMAN 1/5/08

I am a Conman. You may well ask, “On what justification and upon whose authority do you proclaim yourself a Conman with a capital C?” Usually, I respond with one of my many glib one-liners, but today I intend—for the first time—to give a full account of my devout vocation.

First, we Conmen capitalize the name of our calling to distinguish ourselves from the con-man of common parlance, a mountebank who swindles the unwary for personal material gain. We Conmen deal not in the material realm at all, but in the realm of pure Spirit. We view any inadvertent material gain attendant upon our activities as collateral damage. We Conmen deal in currency more precious than anything to be found in the material world. We, and we alone, possess the keys to the unknowable—the ultimate Truth. Materialists will point to mathematics as the vessel for the most abstract and general truth, but they are unable to justify logically the mathematical necessity of the material name “zero” to represent the absence of anything material whatsoever. Similarly, without recourse to the notion of “infinity”—a name with no possibility of material manifestation—the entire logical structure of mathematics dissolves. And even if we were to lower the bar and grant to mathematics a kind of ultimate efficacy as a tool for making sense of the material world, the questions which torture our souls would still remain unanswered.

Why is there a material universe at all? Why is there not only an eternal, endless black nothingness? Given a material universe, Why is there Life at all, and why does it evolve to ever more complex and improbable forms? Given Life, why are humans—alone among the myriad species—vulnerable to the realization of their own inevitable doom as functioning organisms? We Conmen have the answers to these questions that those who call themselves realists, or humanists, or existentialists, or logical positivists, or secularists, or atheists do not. Further, unlike flash-in-the-pan rationalist materialism, our answers have held up for millennia. Why? Because we have the Truth while those who doubt have, at best, only a method for making increasingly accurate guesses about the material world.

The sources of our Truths are the records of the ancient Prophets/Messiahs who received Revelations from the Omnicon—known by various names such as Jehovah, Yaweh, Allah, Dios, the Great Spirit, and God. Privately, we speak of the Omnicon by His ancient Vedantic invocation, Om. Publicly, we speak of Him in the name appropriate to the operative cultural tradition. From ancient times we have universally endowed Him with personhood to cement in even the dullest of minds the essential non-material unity of human consciousness with the Divine.

To the secularist, materialist doubters who challenge the credibility of revealed Truth, we say this: Without Faith that the food you raise to your lips will nurture and not poison you, you would be unable to eat. Without Faith that you will awake in the morning to the same world you left, you would not be able to go to sleep at night. Faith is the fundamental pre-condition to the functioning of human consciousness. We Conmen are